

## NOTES FROM JANUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC DISTRICTS OPEN HOUSE

Prepared by Don Meserve, Preservation Planner

**Location/Date/Time:** Community Design Studio, 75<sup>th</sup> and Indian School, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm

**Attendance:** 40 people signed in; approximately 50 total attendees including Commissioners and staff

**Hosts:** Historic Preservation Commission and Preservation Division

Bob Cafarella, Preservation Director provided an introduction.

Kathy Howard, Historic Preservation Commissioner and Chair of Historic Register Committee described the work done by the committee over the last two year and the selection process used by the committee to prepare a recommendation on the top five neighborhoods for the commission to consider for the first neighborhood historic districts.

Don Meserve, Preservation Planner summarized the steps in the selection process listed in the handout and the HP overlay zoning process. The open houses represent the middle of the application process with three public hearings planned for consideration of the two neighborhoods. The first hearing will be on February 10<sup>th</sup> conducted by the Historic Preservation Commission. Over thirty meetings of the committee, commission and public meetings have already taken place on historic neighborhoods. The HP overlay process ends with a decision by City Council on whether to place a neighborhood on the Scottsdale Historic Register.

Debbie Abele, Historic Preservation Officer described why the Town and Country Scottsdale and Village Grove 1-6 neighborhoods are considered historically significant and why they are two of the best representatives of the postwar subdivision era in Scottsdale. She described how the neighborhoods relate to the historic context and several different themes. Boards were used to illustrate the characteristics of ranch houses and the simple, California and contemporary style home features. She described the design guidelines that would be prepared for each neighborhood designated as a historic district and how those guidelines are a way to protect the character of the areas.

Ms. Abele described how becoming a historic district could impact a homeowner and what the benefits of designation are. She described incentives, such as a \$200,000 local matching grant program for owners of historic properties, and providing technical assistance to help owners decide how best to make improvements that are appropriate for the design guidelines and the character of the area. Ms. Abele also described other opportunities to participant in the process at workshops on the design guidelines and public hearings to consider historic district designation.

Following the presentations by the Historic Preservation Commission and staff, Ms Abele asked for questions or comments from participants. A summary of the questions (Q) and responses (R) follows. Handouts by the sign-in table included two sheets of frequently asked questions, maps of each area, and a summary of the significance of each neighborhood.

Q. Will the guidelines address landscaping? R. Probably not in the guidelines.

Q. What if I want to paint my house a different color? R. Guidelines will not control color.

Q. When will additions or renovation plans be reviewed? R. New procedure starts after Council approves a historic district.

Q. Will the City put any more effort into controlling blight and into code enforcement in historic neighborhoods? R. Preservation will pursue enhanced enforcements/city services in districts.

Q. Does it cost homeowners anything to become a historic district? R. No. Not when the City initiates the HP overlay zoning case.

Q. What is the incentive for the City to create historic districts? R. It stabilizes the areas; encourages reinvestment; property values appreciate; owners are attracted to areas that want to be in a historic home/neighborhood; pride in the neighborhood; Scottsdale's 1950s neighborhoods represent some of the best examples of postwar development.

Q. Is the appreciation mentioned documented? R. Yes, and homes sell faster and homeownership typically increases.

Q. Are past changes to a home grandfathered? R. Yes. Becoming a district does not require you to change anything or restore anything on your home; the owner initiates any changes on their schedule.

Q. My cranks on the casements windows don't work properly and the windows are unsafe for kids to exit in emergencies. Can I change the windows? R. Replacing windows will be considered in the guidelines and have been discussed already as a potential project homeowners may want.

Q. For City infrastructure, will being a district change City infrastructure and get rid of the traffic calming on Palm Lane? R. Guidelines may address the materials that are appropriate for future City improvements. City projects are reviewed when they impact historic resources and some proposals are not appropriate for historic areas.

Q. How will the areas be marked so they are recognizable? R. Scottsdale does not have a set procedure but it could use the blue street signs like those used for Phoenix historic districts.

Q. If the neighborhood does not have a homeowners association with architectural review procedures, can we get similar regulations on design back? R. The guidelines will be discussed with residents to see what owners agree upon for the neighborhood and how guidelines relate to the original design.

Q. Are there pictures to show what they used to look like and how the homes were originally built? R. The City wants to get old pictures from you for the City to scan and have a collection of old photos.

Q. Is there opposition to making these neighborhoods historic? R. The Commission selected these two neighborhoods as the first to be considered for historic districts because they have had strong vocal support from residents in these neighborhoods. Continued strong vocal support will be needed for City Council to approve any historic districts.

Q. Are there any historic districts in Scottsdale? R. These two neighborhoods are the first neighborhoods to be considered. Cattle Track is an existing district on the local and national register but it is an arts campus and mixed use; not a residential neighborhood.

Q. What are the benefits of becoming a National Historic District? R. Neighborhoods on the State and National register are eligible for the state's property tax reduction program. The area would also be eligible for Heritage Grants through AZ State Parks.

Q. Does becoming a district impact giving my home to my children? R. No, historic designation does not affect your estate, selling the home, underlying zoning, renting your house.

Q. Would you put together a handout on the incentives mentioned? R. Yes.

Q. Where did the money come from for the \$200,000 rehab program? R. The funds are part of a larger program for south Scottsdale developed from a budget surplus this fiscal year. The money is from the General Fund. Phoenix voters passed a bond election for \$12 million for historic preservation.

Q. Can I get matching funds to fix my pool or for interior work? R. No. The public benefit for historic properties is for the exterior of the home, not your pool or the interior, so the rehab fund is expected to be for exterior work on the house only.

Q. Is the Commission picking one neighborhood or the other for designation? R. No. Both are proposed and both are excellent candidates for consideration.

Q. Can historic neighborhoods keep their lush lawns and landscaping if Scottsdale rations water or adopts water conservation programs? R. Phoenix City Council decided to exempt the historic district from their water-rationing program because the lawns were considered a characteristic of the neighborhoods.

Q. What if you want to make the home more energy efficient and maybe stucco the home? R. Preservation is working with the Green Building program to consider how homes in historic district can be made more energy efficient while still being appropriate for the character of the area. Stucco may not be appropriate for some areas and may not be the best approach to improving energy efficiency. It all depends on the guidelines that will be drafted and approved what will be appropriate. The City is considering providing technical assistance to owners so you can prepare plans that meet your goals and are appropriate for the neighborhood character.

Q. Do you have maps that show which homes are considered contributing and which are considered non-contributing? R. Yes. Staff and the Commission prepared preliminary maps identifying contributing and non-contributing homes. The preliminary maps will be available at the next meeting.

Q. Would all of Town and Country Scottsdale be included in a district? R. Yes. The original subdivision boundary would be used for the district boundary; it would include every property including non-contributing homes.

Q. Is there a deadline for applying for the matching grant program? R. No applications deadlines have been set. You as the homeowner decide when you want to consider improvements.

Q. The sidewalk has been removed in front of my house and I want to put one back. Does the sidewalk have to be put back exactly the way it was before? R. Don't know until the design guidelines are written if sidewalks and their materials and locations will be considered an important feature of the area. If you put in the sidewalk before the area becomes a district, there are no guidelines.

## Frequently Asked Questions About the Impact of Historic Designation

***Q. If my neighborhood becomes a historic district will this affect my ability to sell or rent my property?***

No, designation has no effect on the use or ownership of historic properties.

***Q. If my neighborhood becomes a historic district, does this mean I cannot make any changes to my house?***

No, designation does not prohibit changes. It is not the intention of an HP overlay to freeze a building in time. To the contrary, it is recognized that to stay in productive use work must be done to maintain, repair, upgrade and even expand historic buildings. Once a neighborhood is designated, the City Historic Preservation Office will provide guidance and assistance so that when changes are made the alterations do not destroy or diminish the historic or architectural significance of the property or district in which it is located.

***Q. Will I be required to do special maintenance or restore my house to a particular appearance?***

No, there are no requirements for you to initiate work. The City HP office would only become involved when you decide to undertake work on the exterior of your house that requires a building permit.

***Q. How is the City Historic Preservation Office involved?***

When you or your architect or contractor apply for a building permit for your project, your plans will be referred by the City's "One-Stop-Shop" staff to the Historic Preservation (HP) staff for review. The HP staff will review the materials and information you submit to obtain a building permit and will issue either a "Certificate of No Effect" or a "Certificate of Appropriateness."

(Over)

***Q. Is the City HP office ever involved with work done on the interior?***

No City HP approvals relate only to alterations to the exterior that require a building permit. Painting and general maintenance does not require a building permit so no approval for this work is needed.

***Q. Why are there two kinds of approvals?***

The “Certificate of No Effect” is a sign-off by the HP staff that your proposed work will have no or minimal effect on the historic character of your house. For example, if you are re-roofing your house with shingles similar to the existing roofing, you could be issued a “Certificate of No Effect” within the same day of application for your building permit. A “Certificate of Appropriateness” is required for more extensive work such as the construction of an addition. These plans are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) for their conformance with design guidelines that will be prepared for your neighborhood once it is designated.

***Q. What happens if the HPC does not approve my plans?***

You can appeal their decision to the City Council. An appeal must be scheduled for the City Council's consideration within 40 days of an appeal submittal.

***Q. What if someone wants to tear down a property within a historic district?***

The demolition request is referred to the HP staff for review before a demolition permit is issued. Demolition can be approved if the property is an imminent hazard, or it has no historic or architectural value or it can be demonstrated that preserving the property will create an undue financial burden upon the property owner. If demolition cannot be approved for these factors, the issuance of a demolition permit can be delayed for a period of up to one year from the date of the application of the permit. During that year the HP Officer will work with the property owner to find assistance needed to help preserve the property. However, if at the end of the year, no acceptable alternative to demolition has been identified and an approved “Replacement-Reuse” plan for the property has been submitted, a demolition permit will be issued.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About How Neighborhoods Become Historic Districts**

### ***Q. What is a historic district?***

A historic district is a concentrated collection of buildings, structures or sites that are united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. The collection as a whole is considered significant historically and/or architecturally and worthy of preservation, although each building may not be individually distinctive.

### ***Q. How does a neighborhood become “historic?”***

In Arizona, the formal means by which a City can officially recognize historic properties, list them on local historic registers, and accord them special protections and benefits is through the establishment of a Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zone. This zoning overlay does NOT change the underlying zoning in any way.

### ***Q. How were the proposed Scottsdale historic districts identified?***

The Historic Preservation Officer compiled research on the important trends and architectural influences that shaped how Scottsdale developed historically. Residential subdivisions were identified that represented the building that occurred in Scottsdale's post World War II boom period. Field evaluations were conducted on all the houses within the subdivisions that were platted and 75% built-out by 1959. Houses that illustrated the important historic and architectural trends of the period were determined to be “contributors” to the historic district. Buildings that had substantial alterations to their character-defining features were determined to be “non-contributors.” Historic Districts must have a high percentage of buildings that are contributors, but not all buildings within a residential subdivision plat must contribute to the historic district.

(Over)

***Q. What is the process for becoming a historic district?***

There are three governmental bodies that are involved in the process to designate a historic district: the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Information about the history of Scottsdale's postwar development and the associated historic neighborhoods is gathered by the HP staff and is presented to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), the citizen body appointed to make recommendations to the City Council on historic preservation. If the HPC determines that the neighborhoods merit consideration for designation, they initiate an HP overlay zone for an area with delineated, justified boundaries. The HPC reviews additional analysis prepared by the HP staff on the district's significance and integrity and recommends to the Planning Commission and City Council to approve or deny the proposed HP overlay zoning.

The Planning Commission next conducts a public hearing to determine if the proposed designation is in conformance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and other relevant plans and makes a recommendation to the City Council for approval or denial accordingly.

The City Council makes the final decision as to listing the historic district on the Scottsdale Historic Register.

***Q. How can a property owner or interested citizen be involved in the process?***

During the study process, several are held to explain how the neighborhoods will be selected and gain input and additional information about the proposed historic districts. After initiation of HP overlay zones for the selected neighborhoods and before the HPC public hearing on the designations, two open houses are held to explain why the neighborhoods are considered significant and what are the consequences and benefits of designation. A public hearing before the HPC is then scheduled and property owners are notified by mail 30 days in advance of the public hearing. A notice is published in the newspaper and the proposed districts are posted with signs about the date and location of the hearings before the HPC, Planning Commission and City Council.

***Q. Does a certain percentage of property owners have to support being designated before a neighborhood is zoned HP?***

The basis for deciding to designate a neighborhood as a historic district is whether or not the neighborhood meets the HP ordinance selection criteria for the Scottsdale Historic Register. While owner consent is not required, the support or opposition of the property owners is considered by the City Council in making a final decision about designation.